

California State Journal of Medicine.

Owned and Published Monthly by the
Medical Society of the State of California

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VOL. X SEPTEMBER, 1912. No. 9

EDITORIAL NOTES.

What is known in England as the insurance bill, a measure providing for the insurance of all wage-earners of a certain class and for their medical attendance in case of injury, etc., has met with a distinct setback. It undertook to legislate the amount of compensation that should be paid to the physician for his services. It raised a storm of protest from the members of the British Medical Association who considered that the compensation fixed by the bill was totally inadequate. It certainly is "contract practice" by wholesale, and the compensation for that sort of practice is usually not large. Something over 27,000 physicians of Great Britain have agreed to refuse the compensation offered in the act and to do no work whatever for the government under it. This action, which is said to have been made official at a special meeting of the British Medical Association July 23rd, of course makes the act a dead letter. The whole incident is, however, very instructive. The original passage of Mr. George's insurance bill, which was called extreme socialism, was but an indication of what many people have said would some day come to pass; that the state would take over the medical care of the people. The refusal of physicians to accept what they consider an *insufficient* compensation does not contradict the probable truth of the assumption; quite the reverse; it indicates that the state will do so under proper conditions.

All over the world there seems to be a wave of fanatical attack upon medical science that has shown more distinctly in the United States, and particularly in the West, than elsewhere. It is very difficult to understand. Of course certain elements of this movement in opposition to scientific medicine are plain enough; the eddyites, the dishonest manufacturing element behind the "league for medical freedom," and the like. But they do not explain it satisfactorily; they do not explain, for example, the remarkable case of the libel action against Dr. Bashford, in England, which was referred to editorially in the August issue of the JOURNAL. They do not explain the increasing number of antivaccination societies and of antivivisection societies. They do not explain why honest, educated and presumably sane people will be carried away into these waste places of the ignorant. The editor of New York *Life* is a well educated and presumably sane man, and yet we all know the anti-everything-about-progressive-medicine attitude that *Life* takes. Medicine has passed out of the fetish stage of existence, in the public mind; perhaps the average person likes the fetish thing and so has gone to the place where he can get it—the eddyite and the various other freak cults. It may be that it is because the old medicine is gone and the new, scientific medicine, the people have not yet learned about; they have not become convinced that science has really taken the place of the fetish. But even so, the situation is alarming and not at all easy to understand.

Why do so many physicians want to come to California? A year or two ago, when the matter was looked into, it was found that there was one doctor to about every 400 of population; and several hundred doctors have come in since then. For the August 1912 examination of the State Board of Medical Examiners, 202 applications had been received up to the time when the books close under the law, two weeks before the examination. Of these 194 had filed satisfactory credentials and 8 were pending investigation at the time of writing; we may safely say that at least 200 will take the August examination. If the average number pass, we will have 150 or more newly licensed physicians in an already over-supplied state. Why is it? Moreover, the Governor has said—or at least he is quoted as having said—that he was anxious to have the next legislature pass a very liberal reciprocity amendment to the present law regulating the practice of medicine; an amendment that would permit any physician licensed in any other state to come to California and practice. That would mean no medical law whatever, practically, for any one with a diploma can get a license in some state and then come here and the law would permit him to practice upon an ignorant public, no matter how poorly qualified he might be. It is commonly said that the legislature which is to convene in January will pass any law the

Governor desires, and if that is true then we can be quite certain that California will become, next year and thereafter, the veriest dumping ground in the world for quacks and half-baked, ignorant poorly equipped doctors. The people will, of course, suffer for it, but unfortunately they will not find this out till it is too late; and the general rank and file of the profession will be accused of permitting the disaster to occur, when in fact it is the people themselves that will have permitted it.

A careless and illconsidered word of criticism about some other physician's work may be as successfully the cause of a suit for **CARELESS** alleged malpractice as malicious **CRITICS.** comment. Too many physicians unfortunately are in the habit of looking somewhat patronizingly upon the work of their fellows and when this attitude finds expression in words, the impression made is distinctly unfavorable to the other fellow. Undoubtedly, in very many instances such implied reflections upon another's work are thoughtless and careless; but the result is as bad as though they had been deliberate. The exciting cause of more than two-thirds of all suits for alleged malpractice is to be found in the comment, malicious or careless, of some physician upon some other physician's work. As a rule the critic is not in possession of all the facts (one gets mighty few facts from a patient!) and when a suit is brought and he learns them, he quite frequently suffers no small discomfort and embarrassment. We, as members of the Society, are safeguarding and defending each other's professional interests against unjust and generally blackmailing assault. Should we not be equally earnest in safeguarding each other's professional good name and so prevent many suits that have no foundation in any actual failure to care for a patient properly? The careless critic who arouses discontent in the patient is more dangerous than the malicious one, for his motives are not so obvious and therefore not so easy to explain. When you feel like commenting adversely on some other doctor's work, just stop and think that the same thing may happen to you. And how would you like it?

Public health legislation by the federal government was the subject of much discussion at both the Republican and the Democratic conventions. Our dearly **PLATFORMS** beloved Senator Works journeyed to Chicago with a plank in his pocket which he wanted inserted in the Republican platform; but it never came out of his pocket. There was a distinct feeling that it was bad enough for Senator Works to make himself and the Senate ridiculous without plastering any more odium upon the whole Republican party. The Republican platform contains the following plank on public health:

"It will strive not only in the nation, but in the several states, to enact the necessary

legislation to safeguard the public health; to limit effectively the labor of women and children; to protect wage-earners engaged in dangerous occupations; to enact comprehensive and generous workmen's compensation laws in place of the present wasteful and unjust system of employers' liability, and in all possible ways to satisfy the just demand of the people for the study and solution of the complex and constantly changing problems of social welfare."

The Democratic health plank, to which a great deal of opposition was made by the eddyites and the "leaguers," is as follows:

"We reaffirm our previous declarations advocating the union and strengthening of the various governmental agencies relating to pure foods, quarantine, vital statistics, and human health. Thus united and administered without partiality to or discrimination against any school of medicine or system of healing, they would constitute a single health service, not subordinated to any commercial or financial interests, but devoted exclusively to the conservation of human life and efficiency. Moreover, this health service should co-operate with the health agencies of our various states and cities without interference with their prerogatives, or with the freedom of individuals to employ such medical or hygienic aid as they may see fit."

All of this sounds mighty good, but it is an awfully long way from a plank in a platform to a law passed by congress! We have seen many and various planks that went into a platform as good sound lumber but came out looking like a lot of second hand tooth-picks!

The pernicious activity of Frederick Stearns & Co., in the matter of their method of exploiting a "patent medicine" headache remedy, "SHAC." was shown up in the *Journal* of the A. M. A. for July 20th. Originally it was advertised as "Stearns Head Ache Cure"; hence the name "shac" which, as it is not a "cure," they were forced to take when the pure food law made extreme falsehood the cause of much unpleasantness. In this country it has become a "remedy"; in England it is still a "cure." The "remedy" or "cure" is nothing more nor less than our old friend acetanilide and caffeine; our dear old friend "antikamnia" and a host of other dear old friend nostrums. But Frederick Stearns & Co., honest and upright pharmaceutical manufacturers appealing to the physicians of this country to use their products, do not wish to be known as at the same time energetically promoting a "patent medicine"—as advertising "shac" in cars, etc. No; they do the dirty business under another name, "The Zymole Company." Why should physicians patronize a concern that does such objectionable business on the side? There are plenty of clean manufacturers that make at least as good pharmaceuticals as Stearns—and *don't* engage in the patent medicine business as well.